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remote user to connect to a corporate office and behave just as if the user were physically present at the corporate office. Thus the remote user's telephone behaves as a PBX extension. In addition, the remote user may send and receive faxes and email, have Internet access and maintain LAN connectivity, just as if the user were present at the corporate office..."

At column 3, lines 1-10, Staples describes, in part : "...When the remote user desires to establish a virtual presence at the corporate office, the remote user dials the virtual presence server and establishes a connection. This includes providing identification information and security information to the virtual presence server. Once the remote user is connected, the virtual presence server instructs the corporate PBX to automatically forward all calls to the remote user. The virtual presence server also routes email, faxes, and LAN data to the remote user. The virtual presence server also extends the corporate PBX and corporate LAN features to the remote user, just as if the remote user were physically located in the corporate office..."

Staples further states, at column 3 "... According to the present invention, the remote user dials the local extension number ... *of co-workers in the corporate office, and can be reached at the local extension number, just as if the remote user were physically located in the corporate office...*"

Thus, Staples describes in essence a system wherein one contact address is maintained for a user, regardless of a user location. This allows an individual to contact the person at their local number, without having knowledge that they are not in the office.

In contrast, the claims of the present invention have been amended to more clearly distinguish the invention from the Staples patent. Claim 1 now recites "...storing a plurality of contact addresses for said watched party in a common location which is accessible via said multiple access network, *each contact address being associated with a corresponding plurality*

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of different devices and having different values ... receiving a request from a watching party to contact said watched party, wherein said request includes said contact identifier ... selecting one of the plurality of contact addresses as an address for contacting the watched party, the step of selecting operating in response to a watched party defined contact rule, the watched party defined contact rule associating watched party presence and user preferences with each of the plurality of contact numbers; and ... selectively forwarding the selected contact address to the watching party to enable the watching party to contact the watched party at the selected contact address in response to the watched party contact rules

No mention or suggestion is found in Staples of 'a watched party defined contact rule... associating watched party presence and user preferences with each of the plurality of contact numbers...' In addition, the steps of 'selecting a contact address' and 'forwarding the contact address to the watching party...' are neither described nor suggested in Staples.

Rather, in stark contrast, Staples seeks to make the presence of the watched party invisible to the watching party. For example, Staples explicitly states, at column 3, lines 34-42:

"... a co-worker or external party who telephones the user at the corporate office, or sends email or fax to the user ... is unaware that the user is actually not physically located at the corporate office, but rather is at a remote location. In general, a secretary or receptionist located just outside the user's physical corporate office location is unable to discern, without opening the door, whether the user is located in his office at the corporate office or at a remote location..."

Thus, Staples explicitly teaches away from the limitations of the claimed invention. Accordingly, for at least the reason that Staples neither describes nor suggests this element of the claim, claim 1 is patentably distinct over Staples, and the rejection should be withdrawn.

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Dependent claims 2-12 and 31-42 serve to add further patentable limitations to claim 1 but are allowable for at least the reasons put forth in claim 1.

Independent claims 13 and 22 have been amended to include limitations similar to those of amended claim 1. Thus, claims 13 and 22 are allowable for at least the reasons put forth above with regard to claim 1. Dependent claims 14-21 and 23-30 serve to further limit their parent independent claims but are allowable for at least the reasons put forth in their parent claims.

Applicants have made a diligent effort to place the claims in condition for allowance. However, should there remain unresolved issues that require adverse action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone Lindsay G. McGuinness, Applicants' Attorney at 978-264-6664 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

For these reasons, and in view of the above amendments, this application is now considered to be in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Date

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CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method of communicating with a watched party over a multiple access network comprising:

providing said watched party with a contact identifier;

storing a plurality of contact addresses for said watched party in a common location which is accessible via said multiple access network, each contact address being associated with a corresponding plurality of different devices and having different values;

receiving a request from a watching party to contact said watched party, wherein said request includes said contact identifier;

selecting one of the plurality of contact addresses as an address for contacting the watched party, the step of selecting operating in response to a watched party defined contact rule, the watched party defined contact rule associating watched party presence and user preferences with each of the plurality of contact numbers; and

selectively forwarding the selected contact address to the watching party to enable the watching party to contact the watched party at the selected contact address in response to the watched party contact rules

~~determining that said watched party has access to said multiple access network via at least one device;~~

~~determining that said watched party is accessible by said at least one device based upon a set of watched party defined contact rules; and,~~

~~contacting said watched party via said at least one device if based upon said set of watched party defined contact rules said watched party is accessible via said at least one device.~~

2. (currently amended) The method according to Claim 1 further comprising:

prior to contacting said watched party, providing a contact address and a description of said at least one device to ~~a~~ the watching party.

3. (original) The method according to Claim 2 further comprising:

prior to contacting said watched party, said watching party providing said contact address and said description of said at least one device with said request.

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4. (previously amended) The method according to Claim 1 further comprising:
determining that said watched party is accessible via a plurality of devices;
contacting said watched party via at least one of said plurality of devices based upon said set of watched party defined contact rules.
5. (currently) The method according to Claim 4 further comprising:
prior to contacting said watched party, providing a contact address and a description of said at least one device to a the watching party.
6. (original) The method according to Claim 5 further comprising:
prior to contacting said watched party, said watching party providing said contact address and said description of said at least one device with said request.
7. (original) The method according to Claim 6 further comprising:
prior to contacting said watched party, providing a contact address and a respective description of said plurality of devices to said watching party.
8. (original) The method according to Claim 7 further comprising:
prior to contacting said watched party, said watching party providing said contact address and said description of at least one of said plurality of devices with said request.
9. (original) The method according to Claim 2 further comprising determining a contextual situation of a watched party and providing a description of said contextual situation to said watching party.
10. (original) The method according to Claim 1 further comprising:
converting said contact identifier into at least one of said plurality of contact addresses prior to contacting said watched party.

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11. (original) The method according to Claim 1 further comprising converting said contact identifier into a plurality of said plurality of contact addresses prior to contacting said watched party.

12. (previously amended) The method according to Claim 1 further comprising:

controlling access to said determination that said watched party has access to said multiple access network via said at least one device based upon said watched party defined contact rules.

13. (currently amended) A system for communicating with a watched party over a multiple access network comprising:

a processor coupled to said multiple access network;

wherein said processor is configured to store contact information for contacting said watched party via a plurality of access networks, the contact information including a plurality of different contact numbers corresponding to the plurality of access networks;

at least one watched party defined contact rule stored in said processor the watched party defined contact rule associating watched party presence and user preferences with each of the plurality of contact numbers;

a plurality of gateways coupled between said processor and said plurality of access networks;

wherein said plurality of gateways are configured to provide said processor with information pertaining to a presence of said watched party on said plurality of access networks; and,

wherein said processor is configured to select one of the contact address for forwarding to a watching party seeking access to the watched party in response to the watched party defined contact rules ~~provide a watching party with at least a subset of said contact information based upon said at least one watched party defined contact rule.~~

14. (currently amended) The system according to Claim 13 further comprising a plurality of watched party defined contact rules stored in said processor.

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15. (original) The system according to Claim 13 wherein:

said contact information includes at least one destination address of said watching party for contacting said watched party via at least one of said access networks.

16. (original) The system according to Claim 13 wherein:

said contact information includes at least one device type for contacting said watching party.

17. (original) The system according to Claim 16 wherein:

said device type is selected from the group consisting of telephone, facsimile, pager, e-mail system, and video conference system.

18. (original) The system according to Claim 15 wherein:

said subset of said contact information comprises a contact identifier which is convertible by said processor into at least one contact address for said watched party.

19. (original) The system according to Claim 18 wherein said contact identifier comprises a telephone number.

20. (original) The system according to Claim 18 wherein said contact identifier comprises a data network address.

21. (previously amended) The system according to claim 13 wherein said processor is configured to limit access to a watching party to at least one set of contact information based upon said at least one watched party defined contact rule.

22. (currently amended) A system for communicating with a watched party over a multiple access network comprising:

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processor means coupled to said multiple access network, for storing contact information for contacting said watched party via a plurality of access networks, the contact information including a plurality of contact addresses associated with the plurality of access networks;

at least one watched party defined contact rule stored in said processor means, the watched party defined contact rule associating watched party presence and user preferences with each of the plurality of contact numbers;

gateway means coupled between said processor means and said plurality of access networks for providing said processor with information pertaining to a presence of said watched party on said plurality of access networks; and,

wherein said processor means is further configured to provide select one of the plurality of contact addresses to a watching party seeking access to the watched party in response to a watching party requests and the watched party defined contact rules with at least a subset of said contact information based upon said at least one watched party defined contact rule.

23. (previously amended) The system according to Claim 22 further comprising:

a plurality of watched party defined contact rules stored in said processor means.

24. (original) The system according to Claim 22 wherein:

said contact information includes at least one destination address of said watching party for contacting said watched party via at least one of said access networks.

25. (original) The system according to Claim 22 wherein:

said contact information includes at least one device type for contacting said watching party.

26. (original) The system according to Claim 25 wherein:

said device type is selected from the group consisting of telephone, facsimile, pager, e-mail system, and video conference system.

27. (original) The system according to Claim 22 wherein:

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a subset of said contact information comprises a contact identifier which is convertible by said processor means into at least one contact address for said watched party.

28. (original) The system according to Claim 27 wherein:

said contact identifier comprises a telephone number.

29. (original) The system according to Claim 27 wherein:

said contact identifier comprises a data network address.

30. (previously amended) The system according to Claim 22 wherein said processor means is configured to limit access to a watching party to at least one set of contact information based upon said at least one watched party defined contact rule.

31. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

prior to contacting said watched party, automatically determining a location of said watched party.

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the location of said watched party is automatically determined based at least in part on recent use of said at least one device.

33. (previously presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the location of said watched party is automatically determined based at least in part on recent use of said at least one device.

34. (previously presented) The method of claim 32, wherein at least one of said plurality of contact addresses is associated with said at least one device.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, further comprising the step of selecting one of said contact addresses based at least in part on said set of watched party defined contact rules.

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36. (previously presented) The method of claim 35, further comprising the step of selecting a contact address associated with a device, that is not at the automatically determined location of the watched party.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 35, further comprising the step of selecting a contact address associated with a device that is at the automatically determined location of the watched party.

38. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
prior to contacting said watched party, determining a location of said watched party based on a plurality of sources.

39. (previously presented) The method of claim 38, wherein the plurality of sources comprises the at least one device that said watched party uses to access said multiple access network.

40. (previously presented) The method of claim 39, further comprising
prior to contacting said watched party, accessing a stored information about said watched party in the at least one device.

41. (previously presented) The method of claim 40, further comprising
prior to contacting said watched party, determining the location of said watched party based on the stored information in the at least one device.

42. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising
prior to contacting said watched party, accessing a location information of said watched party in the watched party defined contact rules.

43. (previously presented) The method of claim 42, further comprising:
prior to contacting said watched party, determining a location of said watched party based on the location information found in the watched party defined contact rules.